

Nigeria's Boko Haram and its Security Dynamics in the West African Sub-Region

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Abstract

This study surveys the security implications of the activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria and in the West African sub-region. It draws on the linkage theory as an explanatory paradigm to examine the group's uprisings on the wider sub-regional security implications. The study finds that the resilient and intractable nature of Boko Haram derives from the internal and external linkages and material supports the group has been exposed to. The insurgent group, as the study further argues, will continue to pose a threat to sub-regional security, as long as, it retains the capacity to withstand and defy military containment. Therefore, a more actionable step to take would be for the government of Nigeria to go beyond the confines of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to solicit the cooperation of all countries in the West African sub-region to confront Boko Haram as a common enemy.

Keywords: *Boko Haram, Security Dynamics West-Africa's Sub-Region.*

1.0 Introduction

Insecurity is not a new phenomenon to the West African region. In other words, instability and conflict have always been a common characteristic in the Westernmost region of Africa, even prior to the rise of Boko Haram in North Eastern Nigeria. Examining the challenges to stability and security in West Africa, Marc, Verjee, and Mogaka (2015) trace the rise of conflict in the region to the early 1960s. Enumerated in their study are the Civil Wars in Guinea Bissau (1962-1974 and 1998-1999), the Biafran Civil War (1967-1970), Niger Delta insurgency (2004-2009), the Boko

Haram uprising (2009-present) in Nigeria and the Liberian Civil Wars (1989-1996 and 1999-2003). The Malian Tuareg rebellion/insurgencies (1990-1995 and 2012-2013), the Civil Wars in Sierra Leone (1991-2002) and Côte d'Ivoire (2002-2007) are other examples of conflicts in the West African sub-region.

The vast majority of those conflicts are intra-state in nature. In the new millennium, the frequency of civil wars and large-scale conflicts has dropped significantly in the West Africa sub-region. In their place, other forms of violence and new threats have, however, emerged (Institute for Security Studies, 2013; Themner & Wallenstein, 2014; Marc, Verjee, and Mogaka, 2015). Examples of such new threats range from violent extremism to ethnonational conflict, election-related violence, drug trafficking and sea piracy (Marc, Verjee, and Mogaka, 2015).

These new security threats and challenges assume different manifestations in their respective countries and environs of origin. In Nigeria, for instance, the emergence of Boko Haram and its activities in the North East has continued to change the security architecture and dynamics of the country. Partially, the insurgent activities of the Boko Haram group in its operational centers and strongholds have also contributed to the instability and security challenges in adjoining countries including Cameroon, Niger, Benin Republic and Chad (Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, 2017).

This study surveys the extremist activities of Boko Haram and their implications on the security landscape of the West African Region. The study draws on the linkage theory as an explanatory

paradigm to unearth the activities of Boko Haram and its implications to the security setting of contiguous countries particularly, in Cameroon, Niger, Benin Republic and Chad. It adopts a descriptive design and thereby relied largely on textual information from primary and secondary sources. The secondary sources include journal articles and book chapters relevant to the subject. Giving the chronic nature of the subject, local and international media reports and news were relied upon as the primary sources.

Analysing various scholarly works alongside local and international media reports on insurgent group, the study attributes the resilience and intractability of Boko Haram to the external links, alliances and support base it is exposed to. It is, therefore, argued that Boko Haram as an insurgent group will remain a threat to sub-regional security, for as long as it continues to withstand or defy local military countermeasures and containment strategies. Insecurity in the Westernmost region of Africa will persist, so long as Nigeria is engulfed in the Boko Haram situation. As a regional economic power, Nigeria's stability and security are of strategic interest as much as her safety and stability are crucial to the survival of Western Africa. The ever-increasing interdependence and blurring demarcations among countries of the region further connote the extent to which the security or insecurity of a country partly depends on another. The roving nature of Boko Haram and its activities beyond the territories of Nigeria will persist unless the armed group is declared a common enemy to the entire region and being exposed to multinational force.

To unpack the central argument of this study, the next section dwells on the background history and evolution of Boko Haram in Nigeria. It proceeds from that premise to the third segment which

focuses on a theoretical discourse on Boko Haram insurgency and its consequent security implications on the sub-region of West Africa. The fourth section examines the group's activities and the local and international responses to it while the last section provides the conclusion and policy recommendations.

2.0 Historical Background and Evolution of Boko Haram in Nigeria

Boko Haram is an extremist sectarian faction that emerged to correct the wrong teachings and doctrines of the Islamic faith and more essentially, to fight against all manifestations of Westernisation (The Nations, 2012). Translated, the term Boko Haram denotes that Western Education is forbidden and that its influence is considered as a sin, while westernisation is sacrilege (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2015). The group emerged as an upshot of a clash between the moderate Islamic teachings of Sheikh Jafaar Adam at the Mahammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri-Borno State in Nigeria's North East and the more militant interpretations of the Qur'an by his disciple, Mohammed Yusuf who founded the Sect in 2002 (Owolade, 2014; Adetula, 2015).

Influenced by the teachings and doctrines of the *Wahhabi* Movement, Boko Haram is a Sunni Islamic Fundamentalist Sect which advocates a strict form of adherence to the *Sharia* law and its implementation in Nigeria (David, 2001). Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram believed and was inspired to create a new order in which the impoverished should inherit the earth (Owolade, 2014). The extremist views held by Yusuf is what led to his expulsion from the Committee of Ndimi Mosque in 2002. Later in the year, Yusuf built a Mosque in the North East to propagate his own teachings against Western education. His teaching largely attracted many

dissatisfied youths who, having been indoctrinated to believe that Western education is forbidden, rejected the Western schools which they were already attending (Owolade, 2014).

As a group, Boko Haram is ideologically not only opposed to Western education, it is also against Western culture, its practices and theories. Though Yusuf received training in Western education, he was opposed to the theoretical postulation that the earth is spherical. He perceived this theory as a sharp contradiction to the teachings of Islam, and therefore, sought after its rejection together with the theory of Social Darwinism and the theory which espouses that rain comes from water evaporated by the sun (Joe, 2009). With its defined goal to create a hard-line Islamic State in Nigeria, Boko Haram is strongly opposed to every element of westernisation of the Nigerian society.

The group also holds the belief that the country's wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few political elites in the Christian-dominated South (African Argument, 2015; Batolatta, 2015). Became more active and developed into the *Salafist-Jihadi* group in 2009, the Boko Haram group came to be described as a diffused movement whose fighters do not necessarily follow the *Salafist* doctrine (Freedom, 2014; Hayat, 2014). The group denounced members of the *Sufi*, *Shiite*, the *Izala* Sects and went on to categorised all moderate Muslims as infidels (Ogunlesi, 2015).

Though Boko Haram started as a peaceful Islamic anti-corruption group in 2002, it subsequently became more radicalized. In July 2009, the group carried out a violent uprising in Maiduguri which

led to a military assault that culminated in the arrest, incarceration and the final execution of its leader, Muhammed Yusuf (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015). At the demise of Mohammed Yusuf, Abubakar Shekau assumed the group's leadership and has since then carried out many deadly attacks on schools, churches, mosques, state entities and security forces.

In the last nine years of existence, Boko Haram has evolved from being a local insurrectionary group to a terrorist group with international affiliations. Its operational scope has also been enlarged beyond the confines of Nigeria. The group's practice of killing and abducting Nigerian nationals and non-national could be considered as an attempt to export its ideologies to other particularly, Niger, Chad and Cameroon which have experienced Boko Haram in its cruel form.

Boko Harm has since, established links various terrorist formations and has receiving human and material resources support from them. The group is affiliated to such other armed groups as the *Ansar Dine*, *al-Qaeda* of Mali in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Unity and *Jihad* in West Africa (MUJAO) (UNSC, 2015). It's allegiance to the Islamic States of Iraq (ISIS), the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and its association with Al Qaida, the Organization of Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and *Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis-Sudan* (Ansaru) are strong indications of its external expansions and linkages (Elbagir *et al.*, 2015; Aljazeera, 2015).

3.0 Theorizing Boko Haram Insurgency and its Security Implications on Western Africa

As mentioned in the introduction, countries of the West African sub-region have been confronted with political instability, civil wars and insurgencies leading to insecurity. The factors responsible for such challenges which different countries have experienced range from organized transnational crime to piracy, terrorist activities and election-related tensions (Djinnit, 2013; Marc, Verjee, and Mogaka, 2015).

Commonly, border permeability is considered as one of the causes of the security challenges countries face. Contributing to the debate on porous borders and the security risk they constitute, Aduloji *et al*, (2014) identify the inability of concerned governments to exercise strict control and authority over their borders as part of the main causes of the security dilemma in West Africa. The sub-region is classified by Aduloji *et al*, (2014) as composed of weak and failing states that are offering sanctuary for terrorist movement from within and outside the continent.

Adetula (2015) associates the motivating forces behind the rise of ethnoreligious sectarian groups to the upsurge in global social movements and transnational processes which accompanied the end of the Cold War. His analysis draws attention to the emergence of new migrants and trading networks and religious movements with complex organizational structures and institutions that are operating across the continent of Africa. Adetula (2015) further affirms that violent ethnic and religious conflicts occur in the context of transnational relations in Africa. Examples of such conflicts are the Tuareg rebels in the Sahel and the al-Shabaab movement in Eastern Africa.

These ethnoreligious uprisings contribute to the increase in human trafficking, child slavery and other transitional or cross-border crimes in Africa.

Nigeria's Boko Haram could also be said to have been motivated by the global surge in social movements and transnational processes which Adetula (2015) has pointed out. This in all approximations, may not be far removed from being one of the underlying factors to the rise of Boko Haram Sect in North Eastern Nigeria. The trans-border behavioural characteristics of Boko Haram, the wider security problems which the frequency of its offensives constitute and the consequent local and international responses it attracts could be contextualized and conceived in different theoretical perspectives. In this study examines the insurgencies of Boko Haram and its broader security ramifications from the standpoints of the linkage theory.

The linkage approach derives explanatory utility in this study for a number of reasons. First, the theory is appropriate here for its ability to provide insight on the intricate link between domestic and external security issues, arising from the onslaughts of Boko Haram. Second, the theory neither contests nor overstress the relevance of national boundaries but rather, unveils the mutual interdependence between country borders and complex link between domestic and international event. The linkage approach renders visible the external links and implications of the activities of Boko Haram. Over the years of active radicalism, Boko Haram has attained international recognition as a terrorist group with international allies including AQUIM, MUJAO, ISIS and ISIL. These factors collectively underscore the efficacy of the linkage approach as an analytical paradigm on this subject.

The linkage paradigm finds its roots in the systems analysis school of thought. Emphasised in this theory is the mutual dependence that exists between the domestic and international systems (Frankel, 1972). The theory meddles into the link between domestic occurrences and their effects on the external environment by taking the spheres of national and international politics as interacting systems. This interpretation resonates with Rosenau (1969: 5) who in his words, described the linkage principle as ‘any recurrent sequence of behaviour that originates in one system and is reacted to in another’. He described the initial stage of the linkage as ‘input’ and the terminal stage as ‘output’, which are differentiated according to their origins within the state their external environment.

The Input and output are connected by three main varieties of linkages, namely: Penetrative; Reactive; and the Emulative type of linkage (Rosenau, 1969). Penetrative linkage occurs when members of one polity serve as participants in the political process of another; it is followed by reactive linkage involving response and adjustment to polity output emanating from elsewhere (Adele, 2013; Adelusi, 2014). Penetrative linkage embraces political, military and economic penetration (Aduloju, 2014). Linkage becomes reactive when it is caused by boundary-crossing reactions without direct foreign participation in decisions made, while emulative linkage takes place when the response essentially assume the same as the action activating it.

The aggressive activities of Boko Haram in North Eastern Nigeria has not only affected the security dynamics in Nigeria, also affected by the group’s uprisings is the insecurity it also

constitutes to governments such as Niger, Chad and Cameroon in the Lake Chad Basin. These countries are vulnerable to Boko Haram insurgency. Boko Haram fighters have made communities around the Lake Chad basin their hideouts and recruitment grounds (Voice of America News, 2016). Nigeria's inability to degrade Boko Haram is what triggered the mutual reaction of countries in the Lake Chad Basin to reach an agreement on the formation of the multinational joint task force. This illustrates the 'penetrative' and 'reactive' notion of the linkage theory in which this study finds representation.

Increasingly, Boko Haram has become a transnational terrorist movement. Its activities have continued to penetrate the fabrics of the society in and outside Nigeria. The permeating nature of the activities of Boko Haram provoked the concern of governments of the West African region. For example, prior to the formation of the multinational force, the Chadian President, Idriss Déby had in 2012, raised concern about the potentials of Boko Haram in terrorizing the entire Lake Chad Basin, if not contained. Reactions such as these motivated the mutual agreement to form a joint military force to confront the Boko Haram. The Spill-over effects of the ongoing Boko Haram activities on communities of Nigeria's immediate neighbours in Niger, Cameroon and Chad) have been so terrifying.

As the explained in their strategic conflict assessment of Nigeria by the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (2017), the insurgent the activities of Boko Haram in the North East affects both Nigeria and the proximate countries such as Chad, Niger and Cameroon, as a result of close the interactions between them. The linkage approach is thus, deemed appropriate in deepening

understanding of the binary effects of Boko Haram's terrorist activities on the interactions between states in the North Eastern expanse of Nigeria, and among her neighbours especially Chad, Niger and Cameroon. Therefore, while Boko Haram aggravates the security challenges in Nigeria, on the one hand, it also contributes to the failing security situation in neighbouring countries, on the other.

The unpoliced lake, the expanse of land and dense forests and the mountains in the remote parts of Sahel region provide safe havens for Boko Haram and others international terrorist organizations, to establish links with local terrorist organizations (Aduloju, 2014). These ungoverned spaces also make it conducive to criminal activities to thrive (Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, 2017). This has also contributed to the rise in smuggling of goods, drugs, weapons and illegal crossing of non-nationals in and out of Nigeria. The successful attempt by Boko Haram to take over the Sambisa forest and made its own territory since 2009 speaks volume to the danger such ungoverned spaces constitute to the security of nations in the region.

The increased influx of small arms and light weapons and the unrestricted cross-border movement of rebels in and out of Nigeria is also caused by ineffective border policing and long years of political instability in the region. High inflow of small arms and light weapons contributes to insecurity in the North East and has also endangered the corporate existence of the Nigerian state. This is evidenced in the rising tide of armed robbery and other violent crimes in the largely Boko Haram-affected North Eastern Nigeria as well as in the situation of insecurity in the border communities of Niger, Chad, Cameroon (Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, 2017).

Boko Haram has continued to be a security risk to Nigeria and her neighbouring countries particularly, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Benin and Cameroon within the West African sub-region (Adesoji, 2011). The security threat which Boko Haram poses to the rest of West Africa comes to the fore, even more, when Nigeria's geostrategic and economic importance is put into consideration. As the largest economy in West Africa, a threat to Nigeria's national and economic security is construed as a threat to the entire Western African community. The leaky borderlines connecting and the countries of the region make it easy for the effects of conflict or insecurity in one country to spill over to the other.

Whenever Boko Haram attacks escalate, the death toll also increases alongside the rate of internally and externally displaced persons. On the hand, the externally displaced population overstrain infrastructural facilities in their host countries, while the internally displaced people (IDP) also worsen internal security issues at home, as some victims, out of frustration, also take to arms and related crimes to fend for themselves. Others become dependants all of a sudden, for having been denied their means of livelihoods forcefully.

4.0 Activities of Boko Haram and the Responses

Numerous attacks have been carried out by Boko Haram since it became fully radicalized in 2009. The group's activities as surveyed here are not chronological. Attention is drawn only to major attacks in and outside the country, for purpose of illustration. Until 2010, attacks by Boko Haram

have been minimal in scale. Large-scale attacks by the groups became more frequent, following the Bauchi prison breaks that led to the release of 700 inmates and an attack on a mosque in Maiduguri (Sahara Reporters, 2010).

The bombing of the United Nations (UN) Building in Abuja on August 27, 2011 was historic. The attack which resulted in the death of 23 people created international concern particularly, giving the global significance of the edifice involved. This attack was not considered as an attack on Nigeria alone but it was also seen as an attack on the global community (BBC News, 2011). The group's terror campaign and insurgency escalated since then. Attacks on government officials, religious leaders, police officers and students intensified in parts of northern and central Nigeria. Armed activities by the group became more complicated when *Ansaru* emerged as a splinter faction to kidnap foreigners. The main faction of Boko Haram also began the abduction of foreigners. In February 2013, Shekau, the group's leader, claimed responsibility of kidnapping a French family of seven (Smith, 2014).

In April 2014, Boko Haram carried out the abduction 276 schoolgirls from the Government Secondary School in Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria (Human Right Watch, 2014). This attack attracted sustained international attention to Boko Haram and sparked a global campaign for their release. Efforts toward recovering the abductees were met with resistance and hampered by corruption. However, continuous efforts finally led to the recovery of 106, while the rest are still in Boko Haram's captivity (Information Nigeria, 2017). Boko Haram was blacklisted as a terrorist

group by the United Nations Security Council *al Qaeda* Sanctions Committee, following the Chibok schoolgirls' abduction (Clement, 2014).

Boko Haram gained control of swathes of territory in and around Borno state, except Maiduguri, in mid-2014 (Blair, 2015). In August 2014, Abubakar Shekau proclaimed a 'Caliphate' in the town of Gwoza in Borno State (Information Nigeria, 2017). the group pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in July, 2015 and also changed its official name from *Jamā'atu Ahli Is-Sunnah lid-Da'wati wal-Jihād* (meaning people committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad) to *Wilayat Gharb Afriqiya*, in order to designate it as a branch of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Daily Times, 2015).

Boko Haram has since spread its tentacles beyond the territories of Nigeria, maintaining sanctuaries and recruitment grounds in neighbouring countries (Bureau of Counterterrorism 2013; BBC News, 2015). The Sect has also infiltrated communities and businesses and has also expanded its criminal activities and networks in northern Cameroon, southern Niger and Chad (Barna, 2014). The continuous presence of the group in northern Cameroon was proven with its attack on the Kolofata military base on January 12, 2015.

According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) network, Boko Haram attacked two Cameroonian villages: Maki and Mada in the Tourou district in the north which resulted in the death of a significant number of people and the kidnapping of many children between the ages of 10-15 (BBC News, 2015). The Chad Republic had two of its police stations in N'Djamena bombed by Boko Haram, on June 15th, 2015 and 38 people were killed. The main market of N'Djamena

was also bombed on July, 11th 2015 by a suicide bomber, resulting in the death of 15, with many injured (Reuters, 2015).

The resilience which Boko Haram exhibited since 2009 suggested that the Nigerian military lacked adequate capacity to dislodge Boko Haram. An *ad hoc* military coalition comprising troops from Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon was constituted by President Goodluck Jonathan's administration to fight the Boko Haram (Lewis, 2015). No significant progress was recorded before Jonathan's tenure ended and President Muhammadu Buhari assumed office in May 2015.

President Buhari's first action, at his rise to office, was to relocate the headquarters of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to N'Djamena. The MNJTF is a collaborative initiative of the Defence and Military Chiefs drawn from Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Benin in 1998 (New Express, 2015; Global Security, org, 2016). With its headquarters at Baga, Borno State in Nigeria, the MNJTF has the mandate to fight trans-border crimes in the Lake Chad region. Its mandate was expanded to encompass counter-terrorism as an area of focus in 2012. President Buhari's decision and action in moving the command centre of the MNJTF was proceeded by an Extraordinary Summit of Heads of States and Governments of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in Abuja, Nigeria (Ugwu, 2015).

Since the beginning of Muhammadu Buhari's Presidency in 2015, the spate of frontal attacks by Boko Haram has dropped significantly but that has not translated into a reduction in Boko Haram-induced fatality rate. Local and international media reports reveal that the number of attacks by

Boko Haram increased from 127 in 2016 to 150 in 2017, in the same locations (BBC News, 2018). A number of such attacks took place outside the Nigerian borders. Specifically, of the number of attacks in 2016, 80 took place in Nigeria, 26 in Cameroon, 3 in Chad and 18 in Niger, while in 2017, 109 attacks were carried out in Nigeria, 32 in Cameroon, 2 in Chad and 7 in Niger (BBC News, 2018). The method of attacks in all the locations ranges from armed assault to suicide attacks- being the most common type.

The Buhari's administration is widely claimed to have been on top of the Boko Haram situation in Nigeria. But media reports such as cited in the preceding paragraph contrasts this claim. What appears to have happened is that there has been a relative increase in political will and in federal might in the war against terror (Boko Haram). The insurgent group has experienced increased military concentration since the assumption of office of President Buhari. Not only has improved military offensives disorientated Boko Haram, but the insurgents have significantly, been pushed to the rear.

Notwithstanding the changing position and tactics, the Nigerian Government may not be correct in claiming that Boko Haram has been 'technically defeated', as it has done severally. Bloody raids and suicide bomb attacks by this Islamist militant group still continues. In fact, recent statistics point to a steady increase in casualty rate arising from the group's uprisings is, to say the least, not symptomatic of the 'win' or 'defeat' which the Nigerian government has severally claimed against this militant sect. The capture of 110 schoolgirls from Government Girls Science and Technical College (GGSTC), Dapchi in Yobe State in North Eastern Nigeria on February 19, 2018 (Sahara

Reporters, 2018; Aljazeera News, 2018) is a strong indication that Boko Haram is still much alive and active. With prompt government effort, 104 out of the 110 missing Dapchi schoolgirls have been released by Boko Haram; five could not survive the ordeal, while one girl is still being held hostage (BBC News, 2018).

In its eight years of existence, Boko Haram has killed a large number of people and has also rendered many homeless. Well over two million people homeless; many properties and farmlands mainly in the remote parts of North Eastern Nigeria have also been destroyed (Information Nigeria, 2018). The group's terrorist activities ignite humanitarian crisis and acute food shortage which left thousands of people in famine, while many have also become dependent on aid agencies for food, water, shelter and healthcare (Information Nigeria, 2018).

The above suffice it to argue that Boko Haram has continued to defy government military onslaughts. The group has sustained its survival by its covert means and has tenaciously, resisted federal military might. As the foregoing analysis reveals, Boko Haram is not national issue any longer. The penetrative nature of the insurgencies of Boko Haram has since remained a threat to the security of lives and properties, not only in Nigeria but also to countries within its international frontiers. This study derives significance from the transnational forays and penetrations of Boko Haram uprising.

In terms of countermeasures, attempts at containing Boko Haram has attracted national and international level responses, giving the trans-border or transnational nature of its activities. At the

national level, the Nigerian government came up with the *Terrorism (Prevention) Bill, 2011* as part of the efforts in tackling terrorist activities. This Bill, signed into law in 2012 was amended in 2013 to accommodate ways of dealing with other terrorism-related crimes (Terrorism Prevention Amendment, Act, 2013) The Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2013 authorises death penalty for any individual guilty of terrorist acts. In giving effect to the central object of the Terrorism Prevention Act, 2013, the Goodluck Jonathan's administration gave unreserved powers to the State Security in the fight against Boko Haram.

As part of the anti-Boko Haram measure, the Federal Government also declared state of emergency in Borno, Yobe, Plateau and Niger states in December 2011; Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states in May 2013, and a military shut down of mobile telephone network in the three North-Eastern states, which disrupted the free flow of communication within the group (Jacob & Akpan, 2015). Whereas these measures destabilised the group's effectiveness for a short period, it provoked negative reactions from the people of the region, due to the negative socio-economic impact it had on their lives (Jacob & Akpan, 2015).

Similarly, the Nigerian National Assembly also demonstrates its commitment to live up to its responsibility, by preparing to act in ways to enhance the protection of the lives of the citizens. The highest body of the Nigerian Legislature vouched to ensure the passage of good laws as well as carry out effective oversight on government expenditures especially on defence and internal security (ICRtop, 2015).

Nigeria also collaborated with the United Kingdom on counter-insurgency measures (Premium Times, 2013). France's assistance was also requested in the fight against the group, following the Yobe State school attack on February 25, 2014 (IFSS, 2014). The Nigerian government also acknowledged the dispatch of a US team to aid the recovery of the abducted schoolgirls by Boko Haram in May 2014. The United States, France and China also had their teams on the ground in Nigeria to assist with these efforts.

At the regional level, countries such as the Republic of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, on March 5, 2014, signed an agreement with Nigeria on a massive joint offensive against Boko Haram (Festus, 2014). The aim of the agreement is to improve the coordination of security, effective border policing and exchange of intelligence among states within the West African sub-region. Following the signing of the multinational agreement was a meeting of the Ministers of Defence from the six countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). The meeting which took place in Yaounde ended in the signing of the agreement on the establishment a multinational force to strengthen security in the region (LCBC, 2014).

Groupings such as the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) were not left out in the search for countermeasures against Boko Haram. For example, the African Union's Peace and Security Council, in January 2015 authorised the MNJTF (Aljazeera, 2015). Under the auspices of the AU, African leaders also agreed to send 7,500 troops to fight the Boko Haram insurgency Nigeria. The decision to create MNJTF was strongly supported by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

In the same way, the ECOWAS also issued a statement condemning the activities of Boko Haram. ECOWAS (2014) identified proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SLAW) as the root cause of insecurity caused by Boko Haram and also affirmed the need for collaborative efforts in ending terrorism in the region. In March 2014, the ECOWAS' Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security confirmed the partnership between ECOWAS, the UN and the Nigerian government to embark on a new Weapon Collection Programme for Northern Nigeria (Iroegbu, 2014). This measure was adopted as part of the more concrete steps towards overcoming Boko Haram.

The Boko Haram insurgency has also attracted responses from the wider international community. These encompass efforts by the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the UNSC. It is believed by the ICC that the Nigerian military and the extremist Boko Haram have committed possible crimes against humanity and war crimes in the past years of insurgencies in the North East region (Nicholas, 2015). According to the ICC's Preliminary Examination Report on Nigeria, the Prosecutor's office finds the Nigeria Military and the *Boko Haram* wanting on eight identified possible cases of crimes against humanity and war crimes under Article 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute (Nicholas, 2015). The ICC declared Boko Haram to have committed crime against humanity on the grounds of the random attacks it unleashes on the civilian population. Such attacks include those carried out against civilians through suicide bombs and in the course of its raids on towns and villages. According to the report:

'From January 2013 to March 2015, 356 reported incidents of killings can be attributed to Boko Haram in Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Plateau, Kano, the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), Gombe, Kaduna, Bauchi in Nigeria...occasionally in Cameroon (since February 2013) and Niger (Dumba and Diffa, since January 2015) which led to the killing of over 8,000 civilians, and "Following military operations since February 2015 during which territory previously held by Boko Haram was recaptured, mass graves or other sites with decomposed bodies were discovered allegedly containing the bodies of civilians killed by Boko Haram' (Nicholas, 2015).

The ICC recorded 55 incidents of abductions committed by the Islamist sect involving not less than 1,885 abductees from Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States, between January 2014 and March 2015; in 2014 alone 1,123 people were abducted, 536 of the abductees were female (Nicholas, 2015). The Islamic sect is also alleged to have detained thousands of civilians in the Sambisa Forest, the Lake Chad area, and near the Gorsi mountains in Cameroon (Nicholas, 2015). The group is also alleged to have held Hundreds of men and finally executed them. The Court explains that any crimes committed by the Nigerian Army would also fall under its scrutiny. Once again, Nigeria is reminded of its obligation for being a State Party to the Rome Statute, the fact that crimes of grave consequence to the conscience of humanity do not go unpunished (Star Africa, 2014).

In several international fora, the UN has also condemned the activities of Boko Haram. The Ban Ki-Moon-led UN also expressed solemn concern about the rising spate of violent crimes in Nigeria. The UN further called on all political and religious leaders to work together to address the root causes of the recurrent sectarian violence in the country and consciously pursue the part of peace.

5.0 Conclusion

The Boko Haram insurgency has negatively impacted on the security of North Eastern geopolitical zone and the Nigerian state at large. The crisis has continued to constitute the challenge to the effectiveness of key policies and programmes. For example, at the end of the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was established by decree No.24 of 22nd May 1973 (NYSC, 2018). Aimed at reconstructing, reconciling and rebuilding the country, the NYSC was created also to promote national unity through the development of common ties among Nigerian youths.

The idea of the NYSC programme was to deploy corps members (who are usually university degree holders or its equivalent) to regions other than theirs to offer one year of compulsory service to the nation. Other than compulsory once service, the underlying notion of the NYSC programme is to forge national unity, after the bloody civil. The NYSC was borne out of the need to assure Nigerians about the newfound peace and unity, after the Civil War and to demonstrate the assurance that they can reside anywhere in the country, regardless of religion or ethnic group. This well-intended policy and programme of government though still functional in the country has been impeded especially, in North Eastern Nigeria, due to insecurity.

With its barefaced opposition to Western education and Christendom, Boko Haram has continued to endanger the oneness of the Nigerian state by deepening the religious divide among people of different faith and even in its own belief. Effects of the Boko Haram insurgency also manifest in

ethnoreligious dimensions in the context of people-to-people conflict, albeit not very noticeable. Since its emergence in 2009, Boko Haram has been hostile to the stability and security of the Nigerian state, its adjoining countries and the West Africa region at large. However, no effort has been made to tackle Boko Haram as a problem of the entire region of West Africa. The so call Multi-National Joint Task Force that is in place comprises of Military units from Nigeria, Chad, Benin and Cameroon and Niger, to the exclusion of 10 countries which together, makes the 15 countries West Africa is composed of.

6.0 Policy Recommendations

To address the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, the following recommendations are suggested. First, it is observed that the 15 countries in West African have a shared history and geography. Implied in this is that what affect one country in the sub-region has the possibility of affecting the others, giving their geographical nearness to one another. It is incumbent on national governments of the region therefore, to forge greater collaboration in improving border management and administration. Nigeria should take the initiative by drawing the attention of states within the West African sub-region to the need for promoting and consolidating a people-oriented comprehensive regional integration process.

Second, the five-member state Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) should be empowered with the required human and material resources to manage to manage the insurgency. Countries: Chad, Niger, Cameroon, Benin and Nigeria which constitute the MNJTF should demonstrate the political will to keep to the rules of engagement on the MNJTF agreement, as that would be crucial

to the success of the task force. The MNJTF should also be sustained to prevent Boko Haram from regenerating itself.

Third, the government of Nigeria and that of the MNJTF countries should pay more attention to the global and regional tide of terrorism and identify their connections to local extremism. This will enable governments to detect early warning signs and take precautionary measures against any possible uprising.

Four, steps should be taken by the government to use the appropriate faith-based organizations to constantly readdress the ideological and religious perversions which Boko Haram has created, to redirect the perverted back to the genuine religious teachings. This will reduce the surge of radicalization in the society.

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